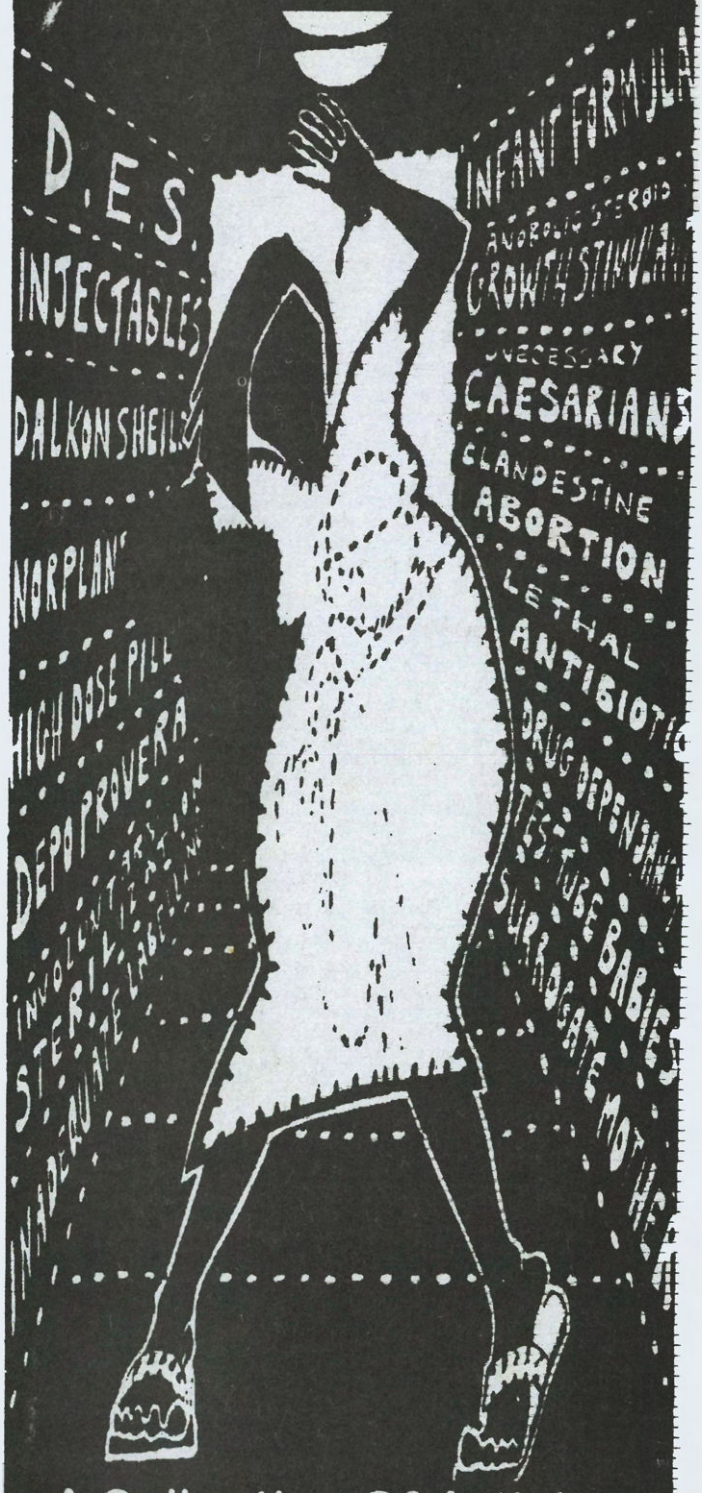
A New Face Of Eugenics

The Myth Of Overpopulation



A Collection Of Articles About Attempts To Control The Bodies And Fertility Of Third World Women

A New Face of Eugenics: The Myth of Overpopulation - A Collection of Articles About Attempts to Control the Bodies and Fertility of Third World Women.
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The following is a selection of articles which challenge, in various ways, mainstream western notions of overpopulation. The views presented are varied and sometimes contradictory, which unlike explanations presented in the mainstream media may require some thought on the part of the reader. Since the dominant Western discourse on issues of population levels, poverty in the Third World and the state of the environment tends to be the voices of rich white men, using so-called scientific evidence and objectivity, the following articles are (mostly) deliberately the voices of those most effected - poor women and women of colour. These voices are rarely heard in the West, even in so-called "activist" circles, and it is perhaps for this reason that many Western activists, be they feminists or environmentalists have not challenged traditional racist and sexist notions of overpopulation. Conservatism on this issue amongst many feminists and environmentalists has allowed the engineers of eugenic depopulating policies to co-opt the language and ideas of these movements, and sometimes even their direct support. All articles are reprinted with greatest respect, and absolutely not-for-profit. Articles included are the views of their writers and are not necessarily shared by Barnacle Books.

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New Shift in Depopulating Strategy Introduction: In the Context of Bangladesh Cyclone

Farida Akhter

On the night of 29th April, 1991 the coastal belts of Bangladesh faced one to the most catastrophic cyclones causing deaths of over 100,000 and rendering one million homeless. Domesticated life forms like cattle, cows, goats, poultry etc. are relatively helpless creatures compared to human beings in the face of the natural disaster. Therefore, most of them were killed and washed away by the cyclonic surge. Trees and plants were uprooted and those which survived had to withstand the assault of the salt water of the Bay of Bengal and crushing wind. They were severely burnt. Despite the early warning to people, the deaths could not be avoided because people living on islands had no place to go. Those who had the option were able to save their lives. The survival stories of the people suggest that the availability of cyclone shelters (or strong buildings belonging to the community) and the availability of life saving trees such as coconut, palm and date trees did save lives.

During the first few days after the cyclone, we heard about dead people only. We saw pictures of dead and deformed human beings amid the debris and piles of carcasses in the newspapers and on television. It was hared to stand such pictures but the media kept on publishing them without any concern to journalistic ethics. They were eager to increase their circulation. Repeated assault on the senses with these pictures had soon imparted a numbness, the thingish lifelessness of the bodies had soon created an image of the people of coastal areas as a pile of numbers, item to be counted in a dotted map of a geographical location.

Interestingly, no one was interested to talk about the people who had survived and were still struggling hard for survival in the absence of food and shelter and facing mini-storms every day and night. How hard the community worked to bring back life in the coastal area was conspicuously ignored. The creative endeavour of the population, their procreative efforts for symbiotic restoration of their relation with nature was carefully obliterated. The final picture that emerged from all these selective exclusion is the coastal belt is a geographic space plotted on a paper where a number of items are placed in a crowded manner. These items are named "population" and the rest of the space with thingish items is called "environment". Life and nature in all their variety of forms and manifestations were killed by the media for the second time.

There were some other pictures, too. Those were of extending hands o f people wanting food. Fascinatingly the Economist in their issue dated 11-17 May, 1991 published a picture of a group of children with arms extended wide in begging posture. A similar picture with extended beggar's arm was published in Times. One can easily understand that the kids normally cannot be seen in this posture. Did the photographers then arrange these pictures to demonstrate to the western readers how desperately the Bangladeshi kids are begging Western resources? The beggar image of Bangladesh, that immensely satisfies the western ego, had been marvellously projected.

While the people of the coastal belt struggling hard in restoring life and taming the cruelty of Nature with her own restorative and life giving principles, millions of dollars were flowing into Bangladesh raised from the Western public in sympathy to the begging hands of the media. It is hard to comprehend the productive and self sustaining interaction of human beings and nature except the begging image of a crowd with mouths to fee. The image was further magnified when on top of it the Western media was active in finding the "cause" of this cyclone. Cyclone did not occur without any cause. What was it? Why so many people died? All

these questions were answered in one word "overpopulation". In Bangladesh so many people died in the Cyclone because there were too many people out there. IN the International Herald Tribune (18-19 May, 1991) it was therefore suggested, "in the longer term, aggressive family planning - with more generous U.S. help - will be required to stabilize Bangladesh's dense population." These are the lessons of catastrophe. Lester C. Thurow, a renowned economist in MIT, USA wrote an article in "The Boston Globe" (June 4, 1991) under the caption of "Bangladesh's birth problem". He started by saying "The disaster in Bangladesh raises a fundamental issue of Malthusian population dynamics. However many deaths were produced by the cyclone of April 29/30, they were very small in comparison with the death caused every year by the poverty of Bangladesh - perhaps the world's poorest country. To give aid to help them recover from the effects of a storm is to focus on a minor problem while ignoring the major problem." This was the general trend of the analysis of the disaster in Bangladesh. The nature disaster like the deadly cyclonic surge is the consequence of the blunders done by Bangladeshis themselves. They breed in large numbers, therefore the Nature is taking revenge. The same age old technique of blaming the victim has been in operation again. Lester Thurow's appeal to the West was interesting: "Giving aid to a country such as Bangladesh when a storm hits makes one feel better, but it won't have any significant effect on the average standard of living or on the number of people who die in any given year. Only a lower population growth rate can help". The most straightforward among all these media coverages was a report in Far Eastern Economic review, 16 May, 1991. The caption of the report was "Malthusian Nightmare - Overpopulation and lack of land behind cyclone's toll" by Mr S Kamaluddin. It started by saying, "Population pressures in the coastal areas of the Bay of Bengal that have intensified alarmingly over the past 10 years made the cyclone that hit Bangladesh....".

Enthusiasm of the West to depopulate a race, class or a section of a population is nothing new. Legacies of the eugenic movement committed to eliminate the "imperfect" races from world to make it habitable for the "perfect" race to still alive. There were numerous attempts to reduce the fertility of the blacks, hispanics, "criminals", handicapped, mentally retarded and others under severe coercion. There were always reasons to justify such acts, as it is now to justify an aggressive population control as an answer to the natural disasters of Bangladesh. The arguments to depopulated Bangladesh amounts to the following logic: The cyclones and tidal surge are natural events. These are disastrous because there are people out there. The answer to the natural disasters is therefore depopulation.

Shift in Discourse of Depopulating Policies

In recent years there have been clear shifts in the discourse of the depopulating ideologies. In the sixties and seventies the fashion was to talk about food scarcity and hunger; overpopulation was blamed. Mr Malthus said this much earlier but the neo-Malthusians applied the same theory in a more modern language. During the mid-sixties the vogue of food scarcity was raised also to create a demand for the introduction of HYV technology in food production and commercialization of agriculture. Since, according to Malthus, food is produced in arithmetical progression, the newer application of HYV technology should enhance it to a geometric multiplying rate. Introduction of HYV was itself a refutation of Malthusian theory. Nevertheless, the blaming of overpopulation continued and commercialization and modernization of agriculture were pursued in order to cope with geometric population growth rate in the countries like Bangladesh. The HYV seeds along with chemical fertilizers and pesticides have occupied the markets of the developing countries. Since then the yield has been gradually falling, the fertility of land is declining; farmers needed more chemical fertilizers to ensure enough fertility of land and more

pesticides to kill the pests. This has created a ground for earning profit by the multinational companies.

In Bangladesh the blame on population continued in relation to any discussion on food scarcity. It is also done in order to hide the failures of the introduction of HYV. For example, a report says, [1] "Bangladesh like all other developing countries is trying hard to increase food production by expanding the area of cultivation and by raising yield per acre of land resorting to mechanized cultivation, producing high yielding varieties of crops, applying fertilizer and insecticides etc. but still it is miserably failing to boost up the production of food rapidly enough to cope with the fast growing population". In other words, the HYV could have been successful only if population growth was not high. In another report the impact of high population growth was shown to prove that it was the population growth rate which is the cause of inadequate food production in Bangladesh. The report says, [2] "A high rate of population growth has intensified the pressure on the country's limited natural resources and inadequate socio-economic infrastructure. Bangladesh has to support a much larger and rapidly growing number of persons per unit of cultivable land. For example, the man land ratio (ie number of persons per acre of land) increased from 1.50 in 1951 to 3.00 in 1974. The high man-land ratio is one of the factors which contributed to the inadequate level of food production in Bangladesh". The are numerous examples of such connections of population and food scarcity.

Next came the argument that the benefits of development will not be enjoyed unless the population growth rate is curbed. On this basis development aid was tied to depopulating strategy. The World Bank documents [3] "The prospects for gradually alleviating the poverty of large and growing population depends on the possibility of sustained, rapid economic growth. Such growth, in turn, can only come about if the abundant human resources can be combined with adequate land, capital and skills. Unfortunately, the rapid population growth is acting a s a serious constraint to the adequate provision of any of these vitally needed complementary ingredients for growth". The linking of high population growth rate with development was necessary in order to string the population control and development aid together. Countries like Bangladesh can receive any development aid only if the government clearly expresses its political commitment to population reduction. These positions are expressed in the five year plans and the documents for World Bank Aid consortium meetings. As for Bangladesh, the government had to commit to population control since the formulation of the first five year plan in 1973. The country was just liberated through a nine month bloody war and losing more that 3 million people in the war against the occupied Pakistani forces. There was no reason for Bangladesh government to be over-concerned on the question of population at such an early stage of its development activities. But donor pressures were heavy on them. So the First Five Year Plan writes: "No civilized measure would be too drastic to keep the population of Bangladesh on the smaller side of 15 crores for sheer ecological viability of the nation. For this the nation has to be mobilised, and early. The more this mobilization is delayed, the more will the possibility of attaining the above objective by currently acceptable means recede. The first requisite is the realization of the gravity of the population problem at all levels of political leadership and the total commitment to its solution."

The Second Five Year Plan (1980-1985) termed the population as the number one problem of ht nation and strong political support for the population programmes was sought. The SFYP section on population control and family planning started by saying "The fast growth of population during the past two decades has frustrated the development efforts in Bangladesh." Therefore the approach to population was to put high priority to population control programmes as an integral part of development process." Next comes the Third Five Year Plan (1985-1990) which again reiterates

all previous plans and says: "considering the serious socio-economic implication of high rate of population growth, the country has no option other than to invest all efforts to reduce drastically the population growth rate." The Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-1995) is no different from its earlier plans and continued to emphasis on population control as a "compelling need".

The latest fashionable blame on population is environmental degradation. Ecologists and environmentalists are raising alarm that the planet earth is losing the carrying capacity, it cannot sustain so many people. There is an extreme pressure on the natural resources. It is very easy then to say that it is the increasing number of people in the third world who are responsible for the environmental degradation of the planet. Again, the solution is - reduce the population growth rate. Although the other side of the story is also well known. The consumption explosion in the west, specially in the United States is much more dangerous than the population "explosion" in terms of putting pressure on the natural resources. It is estimated that the US with only 5% of the world population uses one-third of the world's flow of non-renewable resources and one-quarter of the gross planetary production of goods and services. The average US citizen uses almost 300 times as much energy as the average citizen of Bangladesh. We have seen in recent days how to ensure and control the cheap supply of energy, specially oil, to the West. Mr Bush and his western allies launched war in the Gulf causing unprecedented damage to the lives of people and environment.

The UNFPA report on "Why Population Matters" [4] starts the first para by asking "What is one of the single largest factors contributing to the degradation of the earth's environment, the alteration of its climate, and the loss of many plant and animal species? As the cartoon character pago observed. "We have met the enemy and he is us." Peter Berle, President of National Audubon Society says: "There is no issue of importance to the environmental community that is not affected by the increasing number of humans on the planet. Unless we can limit population growth, we cannot achieve ecological stability."

The World Population Day of 1990 therefore came up with an official slogan: ACCEPT FAMILY PLANNING TO ACHIEVE A BALANCE BETWEEN NATURE & ENVIRONMENT. Environment now has become an issue to justify depopulation.

On 11 July, 1991 it was World Population Day. On the occasion of this day, Dr Nafis Sadik, Executive Director of UNFPA said, "rapid population growth, with mounting poverty, the alarming depletion of natural resources, damage to the environment, migratory pressures, burgeoning cities and unmet needs in education, health, employment and housing, threatens the present and future quality of life on our planet". The message of the world population day was that poverty and population growth combine for environmental degradation. Fascinatingly, as the cause of underdevelopment was once blamed on the overpopulation the main cause of environmental degradation is now drawn on the increasing number of poor people. Listen to what the Director General of the Family Planning have to say about the population and environment: "The two major problems of the developing countries are poverty and ecological crisis. At the root of these two problems are the burgeoning population and the basic needs of this ever growing population. To meet their needs, there is an increasing pressure on the cultivable land. Combined with these, the needs for fuel and others are leading the destruction of forests....." (Md. Nazmul Huq. The Daily Star, 11 July, 1991).

Population Control in the South is a Security Question for the North

The increasing poverty due to imbalance in the world distribution of resources, over consumption habits of the rich both in the developed

and developing countries etc, are big problems of the world resources. This class is indeed threatened by the large number of the people who are deprived. Therefore, it becomes a necessity on their part to create an alarm against the rising number of poor people. The sheer number is potential social instability that destabilise the existing world order. The fear of the elites are quite explicit. About Bangladesh, on the World Population Day the alarm was raised as the following;

"The population of Bangladesh is now 11 crore. If this figure doubles in 33 years none can imagine what will happen. Then the government will fail to meet the basic needs of the people like food, cloth, shelter and medicare. Furthermore the wide imbalance in population size and resources will result in extreme poverty and unemployment. Social instability will worsen, ecological balance will disrupt and desertification will start. As such, the environment may also be threatened. .....". Alarms against population is in essence the fear of the ruling elite class of the world for their own security of being able to enjoy the wealth and resources without any disturbances.

The fear about the number of the poor people has obtained a global dimension and is being frankly transmitted by the local agents of population control. Last year, I was invited in a meeting organised by a local group in a remote village in Bangladesh. The meeting was attended by school teachers, students and a large number o f poor and illiterate village women. Among the speakers, was the Upazilla Planning Officer. He spoke on the occasion and narrated two stories. The first story is the following:

"Once the wife of a higher official went to buy mangoes in the new market in Dhaka city. After she purchased the mangoes and was getting into the car, three poor kids approached her and said, Maiji, we also want to eat mangoes. She was an educated woman. She thought if she does not give the mangoes, they might snatch them from her. So she handed over the mangoes to the kids." After narrating the story the Upazilla Family Planning Officer urged upon the poor women; " so my dear sisters, do not give birth to more children because they will also want to eat mangoes, which is a problem."

The second story was:

"You see, there are only nine cabins in the steamer launch which comes from Dhaka to Patuakhali. In the nine cabins only 18 people can travel. The ticket is expensive, so only the rich people travel in the cabins. The rest of the common passengers travel in the deck. The latrine facility is provided only for the cabin passengers. But sometimes the passengers from the deck want to use the latrines. The cabin passengers allow them to use the latrine because they are afraid that if the poor deck passengers get angry then they might go down and make a hole in the launch. Then the launch will sink; they will die no doubt, but the rich cabin passengers will not survive either."

Upazilla Family Planning Officer again urged upon the poor women and said, "so my dear sisters, do not give birth to more children as they cause problem for the cabin passengers"

These two stories perfectly explain the fear of the class who are genuinely afraid of the poor. But since they are afraid they are taking defensive measures against the class who are being deprived by them - the potential competitors for the resources they are presently enjoying. To comprehend the global dimension of this conflict let us relate the above stories to a confidential security report of the USA[5].

During the Ford administration in the United States of America a treatise on population control was jointly prepared by the Department of State, Defense and Agriculture, the Central Intelligence Agency (the CIA as it is known worldwide) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The treatise was adopted as a National Security Policy in 1975 and has been recently declassified. It can be perused at the National Archives of the United States of America.

The document identified thirteen "key countries" – Nigeria, Bangladesh and Brazil among them - for vigorous

promotion of population control. The most important concern of the study was the "radicalization" of the developing world. The document points out that "younger people who are more prevalent in high fertility populations, can readily be persuaded to attack such targets as multinational corporations and other foreign influences" i.e. imperialism").

The point has been illustrated with an excerpt from a 1974 report by the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka. It says, "Bangladesh is now a fairly solid supporter of Third World position, advocating better distribution of the world's wealth and extensive trade concessions to poor nations. As its problems grow and its ability to gain assistance fails to keep pace, Bangladesh's positions on international issues are likely to become radicalized, inevitably in opposition to U.S. interests on major issues as it seeks to align itself with others to force adequate aid". In the absence of the desired "conditions of slow or zero population growth", the document apprehends, "the concessions to foreign companies are likely to be expropriated or subjected to arbitrary intervention. Whether through government action, labor conflicts, sabotage, or civil disturbance, the smooth flow of needed materials will be jeopardized."

International organizations like World Bank, USAID, UNFPA, IPPF and various other groups are acting on reducing population growth rate in the developing countries. The link with the security department of USA with the population establishments and programmes are very open. Former World Bank President Robert McNamara was the Defense Secretary of USA. It was during his time, the World Bank's advocacy of population control became widely known. The National Security Studies Memorandum prepared a report in 1974 under the title "implications of Worldwide Population Growth for Security and Overseas Interests". This report (NSSM 200 dec. 10, 1974) [6] was suggesting that the Bank could supply low interest credits to developing countries for the development of low-cost health related services to neglected populations. Initially World Bank did not make it a very open commitment to the promotion of birth control. By 1976, the National Security Council Memorandum called the World Bank "the principle international financial institution providing population programmes. Till then WB was not financing the contraceptives use [7]. The changes in World Bank policy towards programmes were more directly supportive of fertility reduction objectives. Since United States controls most of the international financial institutions, the World Bank followed the advice of US. The World Bank population activities were built around a strategy of planned escallation. The Bank lending to the governments and to the families was conditioned by acceptance of contraceptives.

Conclusion

The shift in the depopulating strategy is now clearly related to ecology and environmental concerns. The poor of the developing countries like Bangladesh are now being blamed for the destruction of environment. The external form of argument to justify the elimination of a section of world population cannot hide the eugenic, racist and anti-poor premise of a historic trend which is becoming stronger. The irony is that we cannot save our environment and be developed without destroying the regenerative capacity of the Nature unless we can defeat this trend. The modern "civilization" is based on exploitation and destruction of Nature for the consumption of a definite class. Nature is an external thing to be exploited by this class. The reproductive power of women is similarly seen as a "natural power" to be exploited for benefit. The position of women and nature is similar in this respect.

The women's movement is therefore inherently linked with the ecological and environmental concern in the general sense that the regenerative and life producing principles should be freed from the capitalist-patriarchal greed of the existing world order.

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[Presented at the seminar on "Women, Ecology and Health: Rebuilding Connections" Bangalore, July 17-22, 1991]

Family planning: population control in drag
By David Morrison

Contrary to the claims of the Clinton Administration and population control advocates, men and women in the developing world do not lie awake at night worrying about when their next shipment of contraceptives will arrive from America. Nor do they demonstrate outside US embassies when the shipment is late. Why would they, given the unsavoury history of "family planning" programs in the developing world? Every decade has seen major abuses.

* In the early seventies officials of the United States government joined executives from the now defunct A. H. Robbin's corporation and administrators from many key so-called "family planning" organisations - almost all of whom US taxes still support - in distributing over 700,000 unsterilized and potentially lethal Dalkon shields for insertion into women in the developing world. Arthur Mintz, author of At any cost: Corporate Greed; women and the Dalkon Shield, estimates that thousands of women across the developing world may have died as a result of this American effort to promote "family planning."

* Later that decade, according to the US Agency for International Development, the military government of Bangladesh employed soldiers to round up women for IUD insertions, besides threatening to withhold schoolteachers' wages unless they began using contraception.

* In the eighties, according to a British Broadcasting Corporation documentary, another US-funded "family planning" organization used US tax dollars to mislead Bangladeshi and Haitian women about Norplant's side-effects prior to insertion. Then, when the women became seriously ill, removal was refused. Farida Akhter, a Bangladeshi women's health advocate, has documented cases of blindness and crippling infirmity among the women inserted.

* During the same decade targets became common. Twenty-five countries, ranging from the Philippines to El Salvador, set monthly quotas for numbers of sterilizations. As they invariably do, these quotas led to US women being sterilized without their consent or under false pretenses as workers scrambled to meet them. In Bangladesh, women whose families were driven from their homes by flooding were told they would not receive international humanitarian assistance until they submitted to sterilization.

* During the nineties, right to the present day, some Mexican government hospitals, according to sworn depositions ollected by human rights activist Jorge Serrano, routinely sterilize or insert IUD's into women delivering their second or third child without their foreknowledge or consent, and (sometimes) even over their objections, immediately after giving birth. With the uterus expanded from childbirth, it is impossible to correctly size an IUD, which can embed in the uterine walls as the womb contracts. Then there is the well documented horror of forced abortion and sterilization promoted by the Chinese "one-child" policy, and supported by "family planners" like the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

These are not isolated examples. There are documented cases of coercion from more than 40 countries worldwide. The history of "family planners" is less one of beneficence than brutality. The primary reason for this is that such programs find their roots not in American compassion but fear; fear of the developing world's growing population, fear of economic competition for scarce resources, fear of social unrest spilling over our borders. The US National Security Council's National Security Study Memorandum 200 pointed out, in 1972, that many of the natural resources which the United States needs to maintain its technological and consumer base are located in developing countries. Where would we be, the NSC asked, if the populations of those countries grew numerous enough to want those resources for themselves? Better that we eliminate this future threat by beginning to reduce the population of those countries now. This has been our policy ever since.

"Family planning" advocates try to obscure this distasteful reality behind slick annual reports and surveys purporting to document "unmet need" for contraception in the developing world. Their real agenda cannot be hidden forever. After all, people who genuinely need products and services usually do not have to be tricked, threatened, badgered or otherwise coerced into accepting them. Men and women across the developing world deserve to be treated better than innocents on a used car lot.

Families in the developing world crave a different kind of planning, one that seeks to provide clean water instead of condoms and basic medical procedures instead of sterilizations. It was this kind of assistance Americans used to provide before the craze for "family planning" came to dominate foreign aid. Maybe, once Congress turns away from funding such egregious population control measures, Americans might once again be proud of our government's aid programs overseas.

http://www.pop.org/students/contrary.html

UBINIG

Declaration of People's Perspectives on "Population" Symposium

Introduction

Between December 12 and 15 of 1993, sixty-one women from twenty-three countries from around the world met in Comilla, Bangladesh, to build and ratify a collective position on population control programmes and policies. The international symposium People's Perspectives on "Population", explored a wide range of related issues such as environmental degradation, the New Economic World Order, emergent policies (especially the upcoming International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 1994), science and reproductive technologies, genetic engineering and language.

This declaration is a feminist critique of the logic of domination that underlies population control policies. In most countries population-control policy is hidden behind terms and programmes such as family planning, mother-child-care and safe motherhood.

We Oppose Population Control

• Population policies are designed to control the bodies, the fertility and the lives of women: because it is women who bear children.

• Population policies have inbuilt racist and eugenic ideologies through the process of selection of the ones who have the right to survive and dismissing everyone else, such as the Indigenous, the disabled and the Black. They have the goal to eliminate the poor instead of poverty.

• Population policies represent the interests of the privileged elites and a lifestyle of over consumption in the countries of the north as well as of the elites in the Third World.

• There cannot be any feminist population policy because it violates and contradicts the basic premise of feminism.

Population control programmes are based on international collaboration between organizations such as the United States Agency for International Development, the Population Council, Rockefeller and Ford Foundation, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, and pharmaceutical multinationals. The World Health Organization's Human Reproduction Programme facilitates such collaborations.

These agencies are now attempting to set the agenda for Women's Movements and organizations by co-opting their language and individual women to legitimize population-control policies. Although this co-optation plays a very divisive role and confuses issues, many women around the world are resisting this.

Language and Representation

Population-control programmes were devised already in the 1950s in the name of "poverty eradication" and containment of communism. Today they are used, supposedly, to curb environmental destruction and to ensure "sustainable growth". In fact, however, over all the years these programmes have subjected women in the south to a whole range of coercive technologies and methods which have often ruined their health and their lives.

The population establishment attempts to hide these horrors by cloaking them in words hijacked from the Women's Liberation Movement, and thus try to convey the message that they fall within an ethic of care and human rights; and that they expand "reproductive choice", especially for women.

Language is meant to reflect people's reality and history. Therefore we reclaim words and phrases that have been appropriated because they are part of our Movement's history. It is part of our resistance to create a language which expresses our visions as well as women's reality.

Our resistance to population control policies must never be confused with the opposition of the religious and political right to the same policies.

We reject the term "poor" as it is usually applied to Third World countries as they have wealth which is exploited by industrial and capitalist concerns. We reject the term "carrying

capacity" as a tool which enables the objectification of people and nature. We reject the term "population": people are not demographic variables. That's why our critical reflection on "population" starts with putting the word in inverted commas.

In the present global discourse the term "democracy" usually stands for capitalism and gives false hopes and expectations to people namely, access for all to the global supermarket.

We demand respect for the integrity of women's bodies, outside the confines of compulsory heterosexuality, while the religious right and fundamentalists give primacy to the lives of fetuses, compulsory heterosexuality and motherhood.

The media have consistently equated economic and political crises in the Third World to "population explosions". We reject such media images which maintain the domination by the north and southern collaborators, of the south.
We will demystify these terms and see to it that the interests camouflaged by this language will be brought into the open.

The New Economic World Order

We are now living in a neo-colonial period despite the fact that the colonizing powers were forced by people's resistance and national liberation movements to allow so-called "political" independence in Latin America, Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Economic dependence and external and internal colonialism continue. The new colonial institutions such as IMF and World Bank have maintained the colonisers' power.

After the oil crisis, credit based development was promoted in the south. To solve this crisis the World Bank introduced so called Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). In the name of SAPs, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund dictated prescriptions in which Third World countries have to sacrifice health and food subsidies. Their public health and welfare infrastructure are systematically dismantled and privatized. These diminished health-delivery services are technologized and virtually reduced to instruments of population control. The poor, and particularly poor women, are the main victims of this global policy everywhere.

Another aspect of this new world order is the further globalization of the world market system. The General Agreement of Tariff and Trade (GATT) signed in December 1993, intends to open up the economies of the south, particularly their agricultural sector, to multinationals and to biotechnology. Through the regime of Intellectual Property Right the privatization and commodification of all lives is intended.

With the ecological and economic crisis deepening the old colonial methods of naked violence and repression are used when needed, such as the Gulf war, to ensure control of resources. It is clear that population control policies are central to this strategy. They are a continuation of war in disguise.

This remilitarization of the world has also reinforced patriarchal structures and attitudes such as violence against women, mass rapes in wars and general brutalization of every day life. Commodification and trafficking of women are increasing.

The globalization of the world market economy has shifted and blurred boundaries between the north and the Third World. What we used to understand as the Third World (under-developed, poor) is no longer concentrated only in the south of the planet. Poverty is also increasing and becoming a permanent feature in northern and industrialized countries.

The globalization of the world market economy also leads to a concentration of wealth in the hands of ever fewer people and to a polarization of the societies, particularly of the south. But in many parts of the world, people are actively resisting this destruction of the basis of their lives. In this process they often develop visions which go beyond the capitalist-patriarchal growth model.

Environment

The growth oriented development model has led to severe environmental degradation in most parts of the world, which have, in turn, undermined peoples security and livelihoods. We reject the prevalent notion that overpopulation has a causal connection with environmental degradation.

The north, with twenty percent of the world's people, consumes eighty percent of the total resources. One of the key factors causing environmental destruction is the excessive use of energy in production and consumption. This energy is based on non-sustainable resources such as petrochemical, coal and nuclear energies. These resources are depletable and the extraction processes themselves destroy the environment. The use of such forms of energy is essential to the development of high technology which perpetuates the growth oriented development. Overconsumption in the north cannot be isolated from production patterns and technological processes, nor from the forces creating consumer demands".

Migration

The growth oriented development model has increased the number of poverty, environmental and political migrants and refugees. Interference of world powers with the active collaboration of the lucrative and growing armaments industry has led to war, while low intensity conflict has led to further displacement of people as war refugees. The demands of capitalism also direct the movement of low-wage labourers.

The phobia of overpopulation has not only distracted policies from the actual causes of migration, but has further victimized the victims. Sixty-five per cent of migrants and ninety percent of refugees are women and children. The northern countries, in response to migration issues, are making stricter laws to close the borders, while in the new free market economy, resources and capital are flowing freely from the south to the north, dragging migrant and low wage workers with them. Double standards are practised when it comes to the movement of the worlds citizens between those who are welcome and can afford to move freely and those who are shunned or exploited for their labour. With the signing of GATT, goods can move without restriction whereas migration remains constrained.

Reproductive Science and Reproductive Technologies

Reproductive technology has been developed to control women's procreative capacity. For women in the south, population controllers promote longer acting injectable or implantable contraceptives that leave women as little room as possible to resist contraception should they want to bear a child. A woman can forget" to take the Pill but once Norplant is inside her body, she cannot remove it herself. These maximum control contraceptives manipulate women's hormonal and immune systems effecting long-term changes in their bodies.

Ever since the Pill - originally placed on the market on the basis of tests on a tiny number of young Puerto Rican women, five of whom died during the testing - population controllers' attention to contraceptive safety has been minimal. There is an extensive literature critiquing the shoddy science used to show the alleged safety of various contraceptives, particularly Depo-Provera, Norplant, the anti-pregnancy vaccine, and RU-486.

In the north, reproductive technologies serve a pro-natalist, rather than an anti-natalist goal. For example, in Japan, Quebec (Canada) and elsewhere, where the fertility rate has fallen, governments and media are conducting a scare campaign that the "population" is endangered by this fall. This campaign, along with the notion that motherhood must be central to women's lives, places pressure on women to have a child. Many women turn to technologies such as in vitro fertilization, promoted as highly effective though its failure rate is in fact still ninety percent.

Increasingly technologies are invented that are controlled by the provider, that is, the physicians, the drug companies, the

state. Formerly, contraceptives, like the diaphragm, were more under the control of women (user-controlled.) Whether in relation to curbing or enhancing fertility, these provider-controlled technologies effectively undermine women's control over their own lives while burdening them with full responsibility for fertility and absolving men of their responsibility.

Therefore, long-acting contraceptives such as Norplant are not an advance in contraceptive technology but an advance in control. They are purposeful instruments inspirited by eugenicists whose programs of population control were designed explicitly to curtail the number of Black, Indigenous, disabled and poor white peoples

We note with special concern the situation of indigenous peoples in various countries who are subjected to coercive methods of fertility control in order to appropriate their land, their commons, their resources, their culture. Their traditional family planning and health practices are discarded in favor of modern technology and practices that result in their extermination.

We are deeply concerned about the plight of people with disabilities who are often subjected to physical abuse and are being used for experimentation and implementation for contraceptive drugs and devices such as Depo-Provera and Norplant. Prenatal testing and embryo biopsy are aimed at determining who is worthy of being born.

Therefore we say no to amniocentesis, not to sex predetermination, no to embryo biopsy and the in vitro fertilization technology that makes human embryos available for manipulation.

We further oppose the industrialization and commercialization of reproduction through "surrogate mothers", in vitro fertilization, and sex pre-determination clinics opened by new entrepreneurs.

UN Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)

In September 1994, the International Conference in Population and Development (ICPD), which is largely funded by the UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), will take place in Cairo, Egypt. This conference will pave the way for more population control policies in the coming decade, based on the false assumption that population growth threatens the survival of the planet.

We must reveal the underlying aims being set for the ICPD, which include the myth that the population growth of the south is the problem, while obscuring over-consumption and the wasteful life style of the rich and the elites of the world.

Women's Needs

Women's basic needs of food, education, health, work, social and political participation, a life free of violence and oppression should be addressed on their own merit Meeting women's needs should be delinked from population policy including those expressed as apparent humanitarian concerns for women. Women should have access to safe contraception and legal abortion under broader health care. These needs can only be met if all life is respected and accorded dignity. We demand an end to exploitation of people and the earth.

For all these reasons we state again that we oppose population control policies in all forms. Also there cannot be a feminist population control policy. Our voices cannot be used to legitimize an anti-women, anti-poor, anti-nature population policy.

People are not population". Population control: NO!

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circumstances are ignored. Education alone has not solved the problem of poverty for many women, nor the problem of an insurance in old age, which is one reason why people in the South continue to have large families. In the absence of a social security system children are the only old-age insurance. The policy of family planning is always propagated by the argument that a small family is a happy family. But the UNFPA or other population control agencies have never asked whether in fact reducing the number of children in a family has made them happier or more prosperous. We can read only that the gap between the South's rich and poor is widening. As the world's political leaders dare not openly oppose the system based on permanent growth and demand drastically reduced consumption patters in the North, the solution is increasingly seen in kind of lifeboat or triage philosophy. This philosophy is even promulgated by local family-planning workers in Bangladesh.

> You see, there are only nine cabins in the steamer launch which comes from Dhaka to Pathuakhali (a Bangladeshi village). In the nine cabins only 18 people can travel. The ticket is expensive, so only the rich people travel in the cabins. The rest of the common passengers travel in the deck. The latrine facility is only provided for the cabin passengers. But sometimes cabin passengers allow them to use the latrine because they are afraid that if the poor deck passengers get angry then they might go down and make a hole in the launch. Then the launch will sink; they will die no doubt but the rich cabin passengers will not survive either. So, my dear sisters, do not give birth to more children as they cause a problem for the cabin passengers.[7]

The North's 'cabin passengers' fear of the South's population explosion is shared by the South's affluent middle-classes. Population control policy mobilizes these imperialist and class fears.

Discourses on population and poverty and on population and environment are permeated by several fundamental anomalies inherent in capitalist industrial society. These are the assumed contradictions between people and the environment, the individual and society, production and reproduction, and sexuality and procreation. For capitalist philosophy the basic economic unit is the isolated individual with his/her egotistic and aggressive self-interest, which is perceived as fundamentally antagonistic to that of other such self-interested individuals. Therefore, there is a conflict of interests between the individual and the community which, according to the Hobbesian concept of man and society, can only be solved by an all-powerful state. Adam Smith tried to solve this dilemma by his famous 'invisible hand', which means allowing aggressive competition between these self-interested egotistic individuals for their economic gains which eventually would result in optimal wealth for all.

Already underlying this concept of the human being and society is a statistical view or a 'political arithmetic', first developed by William Petty in 1690. Quantifying society, people and their relationship to nature (today one would say resources), became necessary for rising capitalism. Following Bacon, Petty saw a parallel between the 'body natural' and the 'body politic' and he tried to demonstrate that the wealth and power of the state depends on the number and character of its subjects.[8]

According to Barbara Duden, however, it was not before 1800 that statistics because the new language of all modern science, particularly economics, and that the term 'population' lost its tie to actual people.[9]

Meanwhile, actual living persons, real people, real communities, their history, culture and diversity have vanished behind the abstraction of aggregate numbers, expressed in population figures, growth rates, pressures and policies. The term population can refer, as Barbara Duden writes, as much to 'mosquitoes as to humans'.[10] This concept

of population that transforms living people into mere numbers makes possible, as we have noted, even for a UN document o compare the growth of the 'car population' with that of the 'human population'.

But not only did people disappear when populations were identified as mainly responsible for underdevelopment, poverty and environmental destruction, but other, different anomalies emerged with the new capitalist population policies, namely; in the relationship between the sexual and reproductive behaviour of individuals and the well-being of the community; and between production and reproduction. In capitalist patriarch's liberal philosophy the sexual behaviour of individuals is assumed to be determined by natural laws expressed as biological drives, whereby, as in the case of economic self-interest, people simply follow their egotistic pleasure-seeking, careless of the well-being of others or the community, and of the consequences of sexual activity for women. It is assumed that eventually this individual sexual self-interest, unless checked by external forces, technologies, the state and new contraceptive devices, will result in 'overpopulation'.

The same liberal philosophy is applied to justify not only the separation between sexuality and procreation but also to conceptualize an individual's sexual and reproductive activity as a purely individual affair, rather than as the expression of a social relation, interconnected with other social, economic and cultural
spheres and relations This is why many women put emphases only on women's individual reproductive rights, without demanding changes in the overall political and economic structures of the present world (dis)order. They see only the individual woman and the need to protect her reproductive freedom or 'choice'.[11] The population controllers, however, see women only as aggregated uteruses and prospective perpetrators of over-population. Both views stem from the same philosophy and both are based on abstractions which ignore the real social relations through which people - real men and women - interact with themselves, with each other and with nature as producers and reproducers. The separation between production and reproduction facilitate by capitalist patriarchy is such that producers conceive of themselves as separate from and superior to the nature around and within them, and women as reproducers experience themselves as passive and alienated from their own bodies, their procreative capacities and from any subjectivity.

Feminists in the North subscribe to the people and population anomaly by their demand for 'control over our own body' and safe contraceptives, without asking who controls the production of contraceptives, for what purposes and within which political and economic framework. Women of the south, however, experience this anomaly in the fact that they are increasingly reduced to numbers, targets, wombs, tubes and other reproductive parts by the population controllers.

The aim in this chapter is to show that these apparent anomalies are not only based on false assumptions but also on a viewpoint that blames the planet's ills on victims, mainly poor women.

Who carries whom?

Maurice King, in his analysis of the 'Demographic Trap,[12] assumes that local population pressure is the only pressure on eco-systems, that there is a straightforward carrying capacity calculus for human societies as there is for non-human communities.

Most ecosystems in the Third World, however, do no merely carry ocal populations; they also carry the North's demands for industrial aw material and consumption. This demand on Third World resources neans that the threshold for the support of local populations is owered. In other words, what would be a sustainable population size n the basis of local production, consumption and life-style patterns ecomes non-sustainable due to external resource-exploitation. The

The Malthusian logic underpinning most demographic analyses and population policies of such UN organisations as the UNFPA, and of the World Bank, the Population Council and other national and international agencies, is augmented by the concept of 'natural fertility' employed by some demographers in regards to pre-modern, pre-industrial, traditional societies. When these demographers characterize the reproductive behaviour of modern, industrial society in Europe, USA and Japan they apply the concept of 'controlled fertility behaviour'. They assume that 'natural fertility behaviour' prevailed in all pre-industrial societies before the end of the 18th century, meaning that contraception was unknown in these societies, in and outside Europe. 'Natural fertility' was assumed to always have been high and generally stable, checked only by biological factors: diseases, epidemics; wars; low standards of living; and institutional constraints such as sex taboos.

In Europe, however, after what the demographers have called the period of transition in the 18th and 19th centuries, natural fertility is said to have been replaced by controlled fertility; mid 19th century high fertility rates gave way to lower ones in the 20th century. Increased population in 19th century Europe is usually attributed to industrial progress: better medicines; improved hygiene and standards of living; lower mortality rates. Similar modernization technology, particularly in the field of medicine, has supposedly led to the South's population explosion, because it said to have checked epidemics and diseases, the so-called 'natural; controls on population growth. But whereas this sudden population growth in Europe was supposedly checked by the invention of modern contraceptives, and by education, particularly of women, with gainful employment and more consumer goods bought by the masses, the same did not happen in the South. (The fact that Europe exported its poor to the colonies is usually disregarded.) Since the mid-1970s, feminists and other scholars have challenged the assumptions of overall natural fertility in pre-modern societies and convincingly demonstrated that women, in particular, knew and practised methods of contraception and birth control before the invention of the pill.

In her history of birth control in America, Linda Gordon showed that as early as 1877, it existed long before modern contraceptives were invented:

> There is a prevalent myth in our technological society that birth control technology came to us with modern medicine. This far from the truth, as modern medicine did almost nothing until the last twenty years to improve on birth control devices that were literally more than a millenium old.[14]

From ancient times, women almost everywhere have known of methods and techniques of birth control; men, too, were aware of practices that precluded conception. As Wacjman argues, modern contraceptives were developed with a view to population control rather

than motivated by a desire to further women's self-determination.[15] Feminist historians have provided ample evidence that the so-called witches, who for several centuries were persecuted and brutally murdered in Europe, were in fact the wise-women, well versed in medicine and midwifery, who knew many methods whereby women were enabled to balance the number of their children. Since the Renaissance and the rise of mercantile capitalism, however, more people were needed as labourers. Therefore, theoreticians of the modern absolutist state, for example, Jean Bodin in France or Francis Bacon in Britain, were among those who accused these 'wise-women' of witchcraft because their contraceptive knowledge with an obstacle to their pro-natalist population policy. With the annihilation of these women went the disappearance of their birth-control and other knowledge.[16] According to Heinsohn and Steiger, it was the systematic destruction of these women and their knowledge together with the modern capitalist states' deliberate pro-natalist population policy, which led to rapid population growth in 19th-century Europe, and not advances in medicine, hygiene and nutrition.[17]

The critical historical research has been barely noticed by modern demographers and the population control establishment. They continue to cling to their theory of natural fertility for so-called pre-modern societies and project their interpretation of European history on to these. There is scant effort to study these societies' actual social history relating to sexuality and procreative behaviour.

To give one example: B F Mussalam has shown that the theory that pre-modern societies were ignorant of methods of contraception is false even for medieval Islam, a society which supposedly is more strongly traditional and patriarchal than European society. In a more detailed socio-historical analysis, Mussalam shows that birth control, particularly the method of *coitus interruptus* was not only permitted by the Koran and Islamic law but also widely practised in Islamic society. In addition, techniques, mainly barrier methods, were employed by women. The concept of natural fertility cannot, therefore, be upheld, even for medieval Islamic society,[18] any more that it can be upheld for pre-industrial Europe or for other traditional societies in the South.

Many more social historical studies on sexual and generative behaviour in different cultures are needed. What has to be explained is how and why, in many societies, colonial intervention led to the knowledge of traditional birth control methods falling into disuse, or destroyed in order to produce more labourers for the Empire. And why, after World War II, were modern contraceptives developed by transnational pharmaceutical corporations in order to fight overpopulation in the South. Unlike traditional methods, modern contraceptive technology is totally controlled by scientists, the profit interests of pharmaceutical corporations, and the state. These technologies are based on a perception of women as an assemblage of reproductive components, uteruses, ovaries, tubes.

Women as wombs and targets

The process whereby people become populations is to be understood not only as a mere epistemological change. In practice it meant and means a direct and usually coercive intervention into people's lives - particularly women's, because they he been identified as responsible for population growth.

Following the quantititative and divisive logic of modern reductionist science and capitalist patriarchy, population controllers and developmentalists, both conceptualize people as separated from their resource base and women as separated from their reproductive organs. The population control establishment, including the producers of contraceptive devices, the multinational pharmaceutical corporations, are not concerned with real women, but only with the control of some of their reproductive parts: their wombs, tubes, their hormones and so on.

theoretical and conceptual challenge is to find the roots of non-sustainable population will become an ideological war declared against the victims of environmental degradation in the Third World, without removing the real pressures on the environment inflicted by global economic systems.

The 'carrying capacity' in the case of human societies is not simply a matter of local population size and local biological support systems. It is a more complex relationship of populations in the North to populations and ecosystems in the South. The South's ecosystems (E) carry a double burden: supplying commodities and raw materials to the global market (G); and supporting the survival of local communities (L).

Reducing L, and ignoring G, cannot protect E. Moreover, most analyses of the relationship between population and the environment ignore non-local demand for resources, as does Garett Hardin his seminal essay, 'Tragedy of the Commons'. What he failed to notice about the degradation of the commons is that it is accelerated when the commons are enclosed, that is, when they stop being commons and become privatized.

Enclosure of the Commons separates people from resources; people are displaced and resources exploited for private profit. In England, enclosure of the commons forced peasants off the land in order to pasture sheep. 'Enclosures make fat beasts and lean people', 'Sheep eat men' were some of the sayings that characterized the consequences of the enclosure. 'Carrying capacity' had been problematized because the land was no longer available to support people but sheep, largely to provide wool for Britain's' emerging textile industry. The disenfranchized people were turned into a resource, worth only the market price of their labour power. Displacement from land makes a necessity of growth in numbers.

But not all these poor peasants and craftsmen, driven from their land and robbed of the commons, were absorbed by the rising industry as free wage labourers. Many had to migrate to the new colonies in

Australia. After the violent clearing of people from the Scottish Highlands to make room for sheep, many Highlanders were forced to migrate to Canada to work as lumberjacks or were recruited into the British army to fight in ten new colonies.

Similar processes - privatization of the commons, eviction of the rural poor - took place in the other industrializing countries of Europe, and its pauperized masses were exported to the colonies. After the mid-19th century there was a wave of mass migration of poor Europeans to North America and to other colonies, such as Brazil and South Africa. A wave of out-migration after World War II was not, however, confined to the poor. It was this out-migration of Europe's poor)and the ambitious) rather than advances in medicine, the rise of general living standards and the invention of new contraceptives which led to a demographic decline in Europe. The consequences of colonization and development projects in the Third World have been the same as the enclosure of commons in Britain and Europe.

Population growth is not a cause of the environmental crisis but one aspect of it, and both are related to resource alienation and destruction of livelihoods, first by colonialism and then continued by Northern-imposed models of maldevelopment. Until 1600 India's population was between 100 and 125 million: in 1880 it remained stable. Then it began to rise: 130 million in 1845; 175 million in 1855; 194 million in 1967; 255 million in 1871. The beginning of the 'population explosion' dove-tailed neatly with the expansion of British rule in India, when the people's resources, rights and livelihoods were confiscated.

What is also ignored in this 'carrying capacity' discourse is the history of colonial intervention into people's reproductive behaviour. This intervention was initially motivated, as in Europe, by the need for more disposable labour, labour freed from subsistence activities and forced to work productively on plantations, farms, roads, in mines and so on for the benefit of foreign capital. This policy vacillated between a largely anti-natalist regime for slaves in most of the Caribbean, who were cheaper to purchase then to breed[13] and a pro-natalist approach later implemented in South Africa - when the white farmers needed more labour. After the Herero rebellion South African women were punished if they aborted or used contraceptives. This pro-natalist policy was supported throughout the colonial period by Christian missionaries who everywhere campaigned against indigenous institutions, family forms and methods and sexual practices which, women in particular, had used for centuries to regulate their procreative potential to maintain a balance with the ecological limits of their region that provided their livelihood.

The focus on population as the cause of environmental destruction is erroneous at two levels: 1) it blames the victims - mainly women; and 2) by failing to address economic insecurity and by denying rights to survival, the current policy prescriptions avoid the real problem. False perceptions lead to false solutions. As a result, environmental degradation, poverty creation, and population growth continue unabated, despite the billions of dollars spent on population control programmes.

It might then well be more fruitful to directly address the roots of the problem: the exploitative world market system which produces poverty. Giving people rights and access to resources so that they can generate sustainable livelihoods is the only solution to environmental destruction and the population growth that accompanies it.

False assumptions, false conclusions

The discourse on the prime responsibility of the 'population explosion' for environmental destruction is also erroneous in so far as it is based on a number of patriarchal and eureocentric assumptions and theories which, in the light of careful socio-historical analysis, are untenable.

The first of these is the well-known Malthusian 'population law', according to which population grows geometrically, while food production proceeds arithmetically. This 'law' is based on what demographers have later called the concept of 'natural fertility'; that is, unchecked, uncontrolled human fertility, with no recourse to contraception or birth control, implying a purely unconscious, biological process.

Such a concept can only mean that, after a certain stage, there will be neither enough space nor food to 'carry' the people. The discourse on the ecological carrying capacity of earth is based on this Malthusian logic. But it is also based on what we have called the myth of catching-up development. This means population growth is seen not only as a biological and statistical process, but implies that all people worldwide, now and in future, will aspire to and eventually attain the level of consumption now prevailing in the North and in the rich classes of the South.

In the process of developing ever-more effective technical fixes depopulate the South,[19] women's dignity and integrity, their health a that of their children are of little concern. This accounts for the f that most of the contraceptives produced for an introduced into t South have, and continue to have negative side-effects on wom Moreover, hormonal contraceptives (Depo-provera, Net-OEN, and t latest Norplant or RU 486) increasingly take away from women contr over reproduction processes and put it into the hands of doctors and t pharmaceutical industry. The latest in this process of alienatir women from their reproductive capacities is the research into ant fertility vaccines.[20] Apart from these, sterilization, mainly of wome is seen as the most efficient method of population control.

Since the early 1970s, population control policies have been criticize as racist, sexist, imperialist and anti the poor. These critics are equall concerned about the health of nations and their people and raise som uncomfortable questions for which there are no easy answers. Why ar population policies and research into fertility control supported b certain countries' defence wings and why do they see populatior growth as 'a security threat', evoking their intervention through subtl coercion of national governments and through them of their people, which almost invariably happens to be women? If stringent population policy is truly an anti-poverty measure, why have those Latin American countries who have had 80 per cent of their women sterilized become poorer and more deprived than before? If the intention was a qualitatively better life, then fewer poor street children should have been killed in Brazil to supply the richer countries with a thriving organ trade, especially as Brazil's birth rate declined by 50 per cent in two decades, a feat that the North took several centuries to achieve.

Development at whose cost?

Structural adjustment programmes forced on country after debt-ridden country in the South will serve only to increase disparities and indebtedness in the long term. Horrifying statistics bear evidence of rising infant and maternal mortality, an increase in the number of street children and uncontrolled urbanization. Throughout history, African, Asian or Latin American countries have suffered a brutal plunder of their peoples and natural resources in order to further the North's economies. Today, while an increase in population is held responsible for environmental degradation, the Sarawak forests are being cleared and their peoples made homeless in their own land, in order that Japan can have its upply of disposable chopsticks; Indonesian forests are being felled to make toilet paper and tissues; and Amazon forests are burnt down to create cattle ranches to provide beefburgers. The plunder of such countries contines under unjustifiable world trade practices, loan servicing terms, and unrealistic interest rates on debts. As poverty increases and concomitantly, social insecurity, the poor and the illiterate will tend to look for security in numbers, and national governments will have to apply increasingly coercive measures in order to comply with the population control conditions linked to foreign aid.

In 1951, with its first Five Year Plan, India was the first country to formulate a National Population Policy. Typically 'top down', it was centrally planned, financed and monitored, to be applied at state and local levels. Guided, formulated and designed by external agencies it was to be implemented by India's government and its employees. It did not need the planning Commission's mid-term evaluation report to assess the population policy a faire, as it became evident through statistics that it had not met people's needs. After the failure of the coercive sterilization campaign during the Emergency (1975-77) the programme's title changed from 'family planning' to 'family welfare', but the strategies and approaches in respect of women remained unchanged. Women were seen as ignorant, illiterate and stupid being who wanted only to produce children - curbing their fertility was obviously needed. For those involved in health-care, Indian population

control policies were a double tragedy: first, because they failed to understand and cater to women's contraceptive needs; and second, because they marginalized and eclipsed all other health-care work.

The current population control policy in the south has been criticized not only by people concerned about the exploitative and imperialist world order, but also by health workers and feminists, particularly in the south. Thus, regarding India's population which treats women not as human beings but as 'tubes, wombs and targets', Mira Shiva draws attention to the total lack of accountability that characterized the drive for women to undergo tubectomies, for which financial incentives are on offer not only for those who accept sterilization 'but also for the family planning workers'. In a social context where little change was attempted in other areas, coercion was the one stick seen as a means to beat the population growth rate. The costs borne by women were all too apparent in a violation of their dignity and a denial of their right to unbiased information, to safe and effective contraceptive care and to follow-up services to make the whole process accountable to those involved. 'The deterioration of the health status of women in several regions and a 'skewed' sex ratio call for intervention in several areas, contraceptive needs being only one aong several components of human welfare.' Mira Shiva, a health activist, writes about the side effects of the various contraceptive devices tried out on Indian women, all advertised as safe and 100 per cent effective:

> Lippes Loop was first introduced into India following a strong advertising blitz announcing it as the wonder contraceptive for women. Again, when Dalkon Shield was introduced in the 60s it was pronounced 'safe' until litigation in the US, following the death of seven women users, brought to light the intrauterine infections that had developed in thousands of women users across the world. In India, the problem is inevitably compounded by the fact that due to a lack of access to their own medical records, no compensation is possible even when women develop serious complications. Even if access was possible, the almost non-existent follow up would have nullified any gains made through a control over their own medical records.

The method of female sterilization by means of the costly imported laparoscope was seen as a revolutionary step in the Indian family planning programme. Yet, Indian doctors' callous use of this technology, citing with pride the number of sterilizations performed within the hour, caused it to fall into grave disrepute.

Curiously, long-acting injectable contraceptives are considered safe and effective for anaemic, malnourished and underweight Third World women, while in the North, recognition of the hazards of hormonal doses have led to minimizing their use in the contraceptive pill. Western women who use a hormonal contraceptive, do so on the basis of an 'informed' choice, adequate nutritional status and with access to follow-up, diagnosis and treatment.. The average Indian or Bangladeshi woman would be denied all these advantages, and the significant menstrual blood loss recognized as a side-effect of long-acting hormonal contraceptives would be especially damaging for an already severely anaemic woman. Also, no assurances or 'pep' talks by health workers can camouflage the fact that prolonged menstruation is as culturally unacceptable as amenorrhea or an absence of menses. And there are other questioins: what effect would hormones have on the foetus if they were administered to a woman who was unaware of her pregnancy? It is widely recognized that introduced hormones can negatively influence the growth of the foetus (teratogenic effect), therefore can this effect be non-existent or insignificant in the case of long-acting hormonal contraceptives? Fears have been raised on this score by health, women's and consumer groups of target chasing once again dominating the programme without adequate warning of side effects being made available to users. In the West, Thalidomide and Diethylstilbaestrol were considered safe for pregnant women. There

was no realization that infants would be born without limbs as an effect of the former, or that the long-term effects of the latter would result in the development of breast and cervivcal cancer, and that even the next generation was found to be affected as young adult daughters developed vaginal cancers, and sons abnormalities in their testes.[21]

Population control and coercion

The population-environment discourse gave rise to panic in some quarters and nullified any ethical, humanistic opposition to an open policy of coercive interventions into people's reproductive behaviour. Such interventions, of course, are not new - India, during the (1975-77) Emergency, and Bangladesh have been subjected to them. Farida Akhter from Bangladesh is one of the most outspoken critics of this 'coercive depopulation policy'. In numerous speeches and articles she has shown convincingly that population control programs were devised to serve the commercial interests of the multinational pharmaceutical companies; forced on the Bangladeshi people as a pre-condition for aid and credit; and that, increasingly, coercion is applied in the implementation of these programs. Additionally, in Bangladesh, sterilization is performed without prior examination of the women; even pregnant women are sterilized. But the government, which is responsible for enforcing these programs, has no programme to treat the resultant health problems that women experience. In India and in Bangladesh, women are used as guinea-pigs to test new hormonal contraceptives: Norplant was administered to 1 000 women in Bangladesh, none of whom were told that they were participating in a test sponsored by the Bangladesh Fertility Research Programme.[22]

Farida Akhter has also pointed out the contradiction between the coercive policy vis-à-vis the south and the marketing rhetoric of 'free-choice', and 'reproductive freedom' in respect of new contraceptives and reproductive technologies in the North. She shows how the population control establishment increasingly co-opts the slogans of the North's Reproductive Rights Movement to legitimize depopulating strategies in the South. She also criticizes those feminists of the North who emphasize individualistic 'rights' and seemingly forget that reproduction as well as production is integral to social relations. To isolate the individual sexual and reproductive behaviour from the social fabric can only be harmful to women, in the South and the North.[23]

A new ecology of reproduction

Our critique of an anti-human, anti-woman, anti-poor, racist, imperialist and coercive population control policy, however, does not imply that no one, particularly women, should have access to birth control and contraceptive methods. From an ecofeminist perspective it is essential that women be asked what they themselves want. In target-oriented, coercive population control programmes, poor women's views on family size are not sought.

Most poor women of the South are the objects of two forces which try to control their sexuality and procreative activity: 1) the patriarchal institutions, ideologies, norms, attitudes, which deny a woman's sovereignty over her own body; and 2) the international population control establishment, for whom the women are only potential breeders whose reproductive capacities must be controlled. But in neither the North nor the South do these population control agencies dare openly criticize patriarchal institutions and attitudes.

An ecofeminist perspective, however, is not to look at reproduction in isolation , but to see it in the light of men-women relations, the sexual division of labour, sexual relations and the overall economic, political and social situation, all of which, at present, are influenced by patriarchal and capitalist ideology and practice. Therefore a primary demand is that women regain greater autonomy with regard to their sexuality and procreative capacities.

This implies first, that women must begin to overcome the alienation from, and learn again to be one with, their bodies. This alienation, brought about by capitalist, patriarchal reproduction relations and technologies has affected women in the North more than poor women in the South. Poor, rural women in the South may still be knowledgeable tin respect of their bodily cycles and evidence of fertility and infertility, but women in the North have virtually lost this intimate knowledge and instead increasingly depend on medical experts to tell them what is happening in their bodies. A new ecology of reproduction would mean that women reappropriate this 'fertility awareness', as Mira Sadgopal calls it,[24] and realize that traditional as well as modern sources can show them the way. Secondly, men too, must begin to be educated in women's fertility awareness and to respect it, which implies a new, creative interaction of the procreative potential of women and men.

It is essential to bear in mind that the sexual relationship must also be understood as an ecological one, embedded in overall production relations. Unless these relationships are freed from exploitation and dominance, the oppressors, as well as the oppressed, will face ruinous consequences. Liberating sexual relationships from patriarchal dominance and exploitation is not solely a matter of contraceptive technology, but demands a change in attitudes/life-style, institutions and the everyday conduct of men and women. Clearly the introduction of new contraceptive devices has not resulted in the expected fundamental change in sexual relationships, even in the North. Social change cannot be facilitated by technological fixes; neither can production relations, or the earth, be freed from exploitationand dominance by technology alone.

If men and women begin to understand sexual intercourse as a caring and loving interaction with nature, their own and their partners, then they will also be able to find birth control methods which do not harm women. Such a loving and caring relationship would lead to a new understanding of sexuality - not as a selfish, aggressive 'drive' but as the human capacity for relatedness to ourselves, to each other and, by implication, the earth and all its inhabitants.

Development of this new sexual and reproductive ecology is essential if women are to be enabled to maintain their human dignity; it is even more important for men who, in militaristic, patriarchal society are taught to identify their sexuality with aggression. This aggression, however, is directed not only against their sexual partners, but also against themselves. To conquer the 'enemy', 'nature', women, other people, they must first learn to conquer themselves, which means that they must reject and destroy in themselves the caring, loving, nurturing characteristics that are generally attributed to women, and for which they are devalued.

This new understanding of non-patriarchal sexuality can develop only together with changes in the sexual division of labour, the economyLand politics. Only when men begin seriously to share in caring for children, the old, the weak, and for nature, when they recognize that this life-preserving subsistence work is more important than work for cash, will they be able to develop a caring, responsible, erotic relationship to their partners, be they men or women.

Such relationships will enable the opposition between 'people' and 'population' to be resolved, thus: individuals' sexual and procreative activity need not be opposed to a community's need for a 'sustainable' number of children. We have shown that the concept of 'natural fertility' is a eurocentric, patriarchal myth propagated since the 18th century. Women, in particular, have always known methods and techniques of birth control and contraception. A new ecology of reproduction within the context of economic and political eco-regions will lead to new and/or rediscovered ways to ensure a balanced ratio of people to the environment, without coercive national or international

intervention. From an ecofeminist perspective we demand the exclusion of state interference in the sphere of reproduction.

[2] Meadows, et al, *The Limits to Growth.* Universe Books, New York, 1972

[3] King, Maurice: 'Health is a Sustainable State,' in *Lancet,* 15 September 1990, abridged version in *Third World Resurgence* No 16, pp 31-32.

[4]Nafis Sadik (ed.) *The State of World Population* 1990. United Nations Popualtion Fund (UNFPA), New York 1990, p 10.

[5] Ibid. pp 1 - 2.

[6] Ibid, p 12.

[7] Akhter, F., 'New Reasons to Depopulate the Third World,' in *Third World Resurgence.* No. 16, pp. 21 - 23.

[8] Duden, Barbara, 'Population' in W. Sachs (ed.) *Development Dictoinary.* Zed Books, London 1992, p 147

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid, p 148.

[11]. For a critique of this narrow and indivualistic concept of 'reproductive rights' see F.ter: 'On the Question of Reproducitve Right,' in Akhter, F. *Depopulating Bangladesh, Essays on the Politics of Fetrility.* Narigrantha Prabartana, Dhaka, 1992, p 33.

[12] King, Maurice, *The Demographic Trap*

[13] Reddock, Rhoda, *A History of Women and labour in Trinidad and Tobago.* Zed Books, London (forthcoming).

[14] Gordon, Linda *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America.* Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977 p. 25.

[15] Wajcman, J. *Feminism Confronts Technology.* The Pennsylvania State University Press. Pennsylvania 1991, p 76

[16] For a discussion of the witch-hunt and its impact on women see Mies, M *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour.* Zed Books, London 1991.

[17] Heinsohn G. and Steiger O. *Die Vernichtung der Weisen Frauen, Hexenverfolgung, Bevolkerungspolitik.* Marz-Verlag, Herbstein 1984.

[18] Mussalam, B.F. *Sex and Society in Islam,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1986.

[19] Akhter, Farida, op. cit.

[20] Dr Talwar in Bombay is one of the researchers who is working on the development of an anti-fertility vaccine. (See Video Documentary 'Something like a War' by Deepa Dhanraj and Abha Bhaiya.)

[21] Vandana Shiva and Mira Shiva, 'Population and Environment: an Indian Perspective' in *Power, Population and the Environment : Women Speak.* WEED Foundation, Toronto 1992 (compiled by Gillaim Philipps) pp. 43 - 51.

[22] Akhter,F. op cit pp 26-32

[23] Ibid., pp 41-56

[24] Sadgopal, Mira, 'Fertility Awareness Education in the Context of Development Issues.' Paper presented at a Seminar on Women and Development, Pune University, 6 February 1992.

Racism, Birth Control and Reproduction (excerpt) by Angela Davis

* * * *

It was not a coincidence that women's consciousness of their reproductive rights was born within the organized movement for women's political equality. Indeed, if women remained forever burdened by incessant childbirths and frequent miscarriages, they would hardly be able to exercise the political rights they might win. Moreover, women's new dreams of pursuing careers and other paths of self-development outside marriage and motherhood could only be realized if they could limit and plan their pregnancies. In this sense, the slogan "voluntary motherhood" contained a new and genuinely progressive vision of womanhood. At the same time, however, this vision was rigidly bound to the lifestyle enjoyed by the middle classes and the bourgeoisie. The aspirations underlying the demand for "voluntary motherhood" did not reflect the conditions of working-class women, engaged as they were in a far more fundamental fight for economic survival. Since this first call for birth control was associated with goals which could only be achieved by women possessing material wealth, vast numbers of poor and working-class women would find it rather difficult to identify with the embryonic birth control movement.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century the white birth rate in the United States suffered a significant decline. Since no contraceptive innovations had been publicly introduced, the drop in the birth rate implied that women were substantially curtailing their sexual activity. By 1890 the typical native-born white woman was bearing no more than four children.[12] Since U.S. society was becoming increasingly urban, this new birth pattern should not have been a surprise. While farm life demanded large families, they became dysfunctional within the context of city life. Yet this phenomenon was publicly interpreted in a racist and anti-working-class fashion by the ideologues of rising monopoly capitalism. Since native-born white women were bearing fewer children, the spectre of "race suicide" was raised in official circles.

In 1905 President Theodore Roosevelt concluded his Lincoln Day Dinner speech with the proclamation that "race purity must be maintained."[13] By 1906 he blatantly equated the falling birth rate among native-born whites with the impending threat of "race suicide". In his State of the Union message that year Roosevelt admonished the well-born white women who engaged in "wilful sterility - the one sin for which the penalty is national death, race suicide."[14] These comments were made during a period of accelerating racist ideology and of great waves of race riots and lynchings on the domestic scene. Moreover, President Roosevelt himself was attempting to muster support for the U.S. seizure of the Philippines, the country's most recent imperialist venture.

How did the birth control movement respond to Roosevelt's accusation that their cause was promoting race suicide? The President's propagandistic ploy was a failure, according to a leading historian of the birth control movement, for, ironically, it led to greater support for its advocates. Yet, as Linda Gordon maintains, this controversy "...also brought to the forefront those issues that most separated feminists from the working class and the poor."[15]

> This happened in two ways. First, the feminists were increasingly emphasizing birth control as a route to careers and higher education - goals out of reach of the poor with or without birth conrol. In the context of the whole feminist movement, the race-suicide episode was an additional factor identifying feminism almost exclusively with the aspirations of the more privileged women of the society. Secondly, the pro-birth control feminists began to popularize the idea that poor people had a moral obligation to restrict

the size of their families, because large families create a drain on the taxes and charity expenditures of the wealthy and because poor children were less likely to be "superior".[16]

The acceptance of the race-suicide thesis, to a greater or a lesser extent, by women such as Julia Ward Howe and Ida Husted Harper reflected the suffrage movements capitulation to the racist posture of Southern women. If the suffragists acquiesced to arguments invoking the extension of the ballot to women as the saving grace of white supremacy, then birth control advocates either acquiesced to or supported the new arguments invoking birth control as a means of preventing the proliferation of the "lower classes" and as an antidote to race suicide. Race suicide could be prevented by the introduction of birth control among Black people, immigrants, and the poor in general. In this way, the prosperous whites of solid Yankee stock could maintain their superior numbers in the population. Thus class-bias and racism crept into the birth control movement when it was still in its infancy. More and more, it was assumed within birth control circles that poor women, Black and immigrant alike, has a "moral obligation to restrict the size of their families."[17] What was demanded as a "right" for the privileged came to be interpreted as a "duty" for the poor.

* * * *

Unfortunately, the alliance between the birth control campaign and the radical labor movement did not enjoy a very long life. While Socialists and other working-class activists continued to support the demand for birth control, it did not occupy a central place in their overall strategy. And Sanger herself began to underestimate the centrality of capitalist exploitation in her analysis of poverty, arguing that too many children caused workers to fall into their miserable predicament. Moreover, "...women were inadvertently perpetuating the exploitation of the working class," she believed, "by continually flooding the labor market with new workers."[24] Ironically, Sanger may have been encouraged to adopt this position by the neo-Malthusian ideas embraced in some socialist circles. Such outstanding figures of the European socialist movement as Anatole France and Rosa Luxemburg had proposed a "birth strike" to prevent the continued flow of labor into the capitalist market.[25]

When Margaret Sanger severed her ties with the Socialist party for the purpose of building an independent birth control campaign, she and her followers became more susceptible than ever before to the anti-Black and anti-immigrant propaganda of the times. Like their predecessors, who had been deceived by the "race suicide" propaganda, the advocates of birth control began to embrace the prevailing racist ideology. The fatal influence of the eugenics movement would soon destroy the progressive potential of the birth control campaign.

During the first decades of the twentieth century the rising popularity of the eugenics movement was hardly a fortuitous development. Eugenic ideas were perfectly suited to the ideological needs of the young monopoly capitalists. Imperialist incursions in Latin America and in the Pacific needed to be justified, as did the intensified exploitation of Black workers in the South and immigrant workers in the North and West. The pseudo-scientific racial theories associated with the eugenics campaign furnished dramatic apologies for the conduct of the young monopolies. As a result, this movement won the unhesitating support of such leading capitalists as the Carnegies, the Harrimans and the Kellogs.[26]

By 1919 the eugenic influence on the birth control movement was unmistakably clear. In an article published by Margaret Sanger in the American Birth Control League's journal, she defined "the chief issue of birth control" as "more children from the fit, less from the unfit."[27] Around this time the ABCL heartily welcomed the author of *The Rising Tide of Color Against White*

World Supremacy into its inner sanctum.[28] Lothrop Stoddard, Harvard Professor and theoretician of the eugenics movement, was offered a seat on the board of directors. In the pages of the ABCL's journal, articles by Guy Irving Birch, director of the American Eugenics Society, began to appear. Birch advocated birth control as a weapon to

> ...prevent the American people from being replaced by alien or Negro stock, whether it be by immigration or by overly high birth rates among others in this country.[29]

By 1932 the Eugenics Society could boast that at least twenty-six states had passed compulsory sterilization laws and that thousands of "unfit" persons had already been surgically prevented from reproducing.[30] Margaret Sanger offered her public approval of this development. "Morons, mental defectives, epileptics, illiterates, paupers, unemployables, criminals, prostitutes and dope fiends" ought to be surgically sterilized, she argued in a radio talk.[31] She did not wish to be so intransigent as to leave them with no choice in the matter; if they wished, she said, they should be able to choose a lifelong segregated existence in labor camps.

Within the American Birth Control League, the call for birth control among Black people acquired the same racist edge as the call for compulsory sterilization. In 1939 its successor, the Birth Control Federation of America, planned a "Negro Project". In the Federation's words,

> (t)he mass of Negroes, particularly in the South, still breed carelessly and disastrously, with the result that the increase among Negroes, even more than among whites, is from that portion of the population least fit, and least able to rear children properly.[32]

Calling for the recruitment of black ministers to lead local birth control committees, the Federation's proposal suggested that Black people should be rendered as vulnerable as possible to their birth control propaganda. "We do not want word to get out," wrote Margaret Sanger in a letter to a colleague,

> ...that we want to exterminate the Negro population and the minister is the man who can straighten out that idea if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious members.[33]

This episode in the birth control movement confirmed the ideological victory of the racism associated with eugenic ideas. It had been robbed of its progressive potential, advocating for people of color not the individual right to *birth control*, but rather the racist strategy of *population control*. The birth control campaign would be called upon to serve in an essential capacity in the execution of the U.S. government's imperialist and racist population policy.

The abortion rights activists of the early 1970's should have examined the history of their movement. Had they done so, they might have understood why so many of their Black sisters adopted a posture of suspicion toward their cause. They might have understood how important it was to undo the racist deeds of their predecessors, who had advocated birth control as well as compulsory sterilization as a means of eliminating the "unfit" sectors of the population. Consequently, the young white feminists might have been more receptive to the suggestion that their campaign for abortion rights include a vigorous condemnation of sterilization abuse, which had become more widespread than ever.

It was not until the media decided that the casual sterilization of two Black girls in Montgomery, Alabama, was a scandal worth reporting that the Pandora's box of sterilization abuse was finally flung open. But by the time the case of the Relf sisters broke, it was practically too late to influence the politics of the abortion rights movement. It was the summer of 1973 and the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortions had already been

announced in January. Nevertheless, the urgent need for mass opposition to sterilization abuse became tragically clear. The facts surrounding the Relf sisters' story were horrifyingly simple. Minnie Lee, who was twelve years old, and Mary Alice who was fourteen, had been unsuspectingly carted into an operating room, where surgeons irrevocably robbed them of their capacity to bear children.[34] The surgery had been ordered by the HEW-funded Montgomery Community Action Committee after it was discovered that Depo-Provera, a drug previously administered to the girls as a birth prevention measure, caused cancer in test animals.[35]

After the Southern Poverty Law Center filed suit on behalf of the Relf sisters, the girls' mother revealed that she had unknowingly "consented" to the operation, having been deceived by the social workers who handled her daughters' case. They had asked Mrs Relf, who was unable to read, to put her "X" on a document, the contents of which were not described to her. She assumed, she said, that it authorized the continued Depo-Provera injections. As she subsequently learned, she had authorized the surgical sterilization of her daughters.[36]

In the aftermath of the publicity exposing the Relf sisters' case, similar episodes were brought to light. In Montgomery alone, eleven girls, also in their teens, had been similarly sterilized. HEW-funded birth control clinics in other states, as it turned out, had also subjected young girls to sterilization abuse. Moreover, individual women came forth with equally outrageous stories. Nial Ruth Cox, for example, filed suit against the state of North Carolina. At the age of eighteen - eight years before the suit - officials threatened to discontinue her family welfare payments if she refused to submit to surgical sterilization.[37] Before she assented to the operation, she was assured that her infertility would be temporary.[38]

Nial Ruth Cox's lawsuit was aimed at a state which had diligently practiced the theory of eugenics. Under the auspices of the Eugenics Commission of North Carolina, so it was learned, 7,686 sterilizations had been carried out since 1933. Although the operations were justified as measures to prevent the reproduction of "mentally deficient persons", about 5,000 of the sterilized persons had been Black.[39] According to Brenda Feigen Fasteau, the ACLU attorney representing Nial Ruth Cox, North Carolina's recent report was not much better.

> As far as I can determine, the statistics reveal that since 1964, approximately 65% of the women sterilized in North Carolina were Black and approximately 35% were white.[40]

As the flurry of publicity exposing sterilization abuse revealed, the neighbouring state of South Carolina had been the site of further atrocities. Eighteen women from Aiken, South Carolina, charged that they had been sterilized by a Dr. Clovis Pierce during the early 1970's. The sole obstetrician in that small town, Pierce had consistently sterilized Medicaid recipients with two or more children. According to a nurse in his office, Dr Pierce insisted that pregnant welfare women "will have to submit (sic!) to voluntary sterilization" if they wanted him to deliver their babies.[41] While he was "...tired of people running around and having babies and paying for them with my taxes,"[42] Dr. Pierce received some $60,000 in taxpayers' money for the sterilizations he performed. During his trial he was supported by the South Carolina Medical Association, whose members declared that doctors "...have a moral and legal right to insist on sterilization permission before accepting a patient, if it is done on the initial visit."[43]

Revelations of sterilization abuse during that time exposed the complicity of the Federal government. At first the Department of Health, Education and Welfare claimed that approximately 16,000 women and 8,000 men had been sterilized in 1972 under the auspices of federal programs.[44] Later, however, these figures underwent a drastic revision. Carl Shultz, director of HEW's Population Affairs

Office, estimated that between 100,000 and 200,000 sterilizations had actually been funded that year by the federal government.[45] During Hitler's Germany, incidentally, 250,000 sterilizations were carried out under the Nazi's Heriditary Health Law.[46] Is it possible that the record of the Nazis, throughout the years of their reign, may have been almost equalled by US government-funded sterilizations in the space of a single year?

Given the historical genocide inflicted on the native population of the United States, one would assume that Native American Indians would be exempted from the government's sterilization campaign. But according to Dr. Connie Uri's testimony in a Senate committee hearing, by 1976 some 24 per cent of all Indian women of childbearing age had been sterilized.[47] "Our blood lines are being stopped", the Choctaw physician told the Senate committee, "Our unborn will not be born...This is genocidal to our people."[48] According to Dr Uri, the Indian Health Services Hospital in Claremore, Oklahoma, had been sterilizing one out of every four women giving birth in that federal facility.[49]

Native American Indians are special targets of government propaganda on sterilization. In one of the HEW pamphlets aimed at Indian people, there is a sketch of a family with *ten children* and *one horse* and another sketch of a family with *one child* and *ten horses*. The drawings are supposed to imply that more children mean more poverty and fewer children mean wealth. As if the ten horses owned by the one-child family had been magically conjured up by birth control and sterilization surgery.

The domestic population policy of the U.S. government has an undeniably racist edge. Native American, Chicana, Puerto Rican and Black women continue to be sterilized in disproportionate numbers. According to a National Fertility Study conducted in 1970 by Princeton University's Office of Population Control, 20 percent of all married Black women have been permanently sterilized.[50] Approximately the same percentage of Chicana women had been rendered surgically infertile.[51] Moreover, 43 percent of the women sterilized through federally subsidized programs were Black.[52]

* * * *

Over the last decade the struggle against sterilization abuse has been waged primarily by Puerto Rican, Black, Chicana and Native American women. Their cause has not yet been embraced by the women's movement as a whole. Within organizations representing the interests of middle-class white women, there has been a certain reluctance to support the demands of the campaign against sterilization abuse, for these women are often denied their individual rights to be sterilized when they desire to take this step. While women of color are urged at every turn, to become permanently infertile, white women enjoying prosperous economic conditions are urged, by the same forces, to reproduce themselves. They therefore sometimes consider the "waiting period" and other details of the demand for "informed consent" to sterilization as further inconveniences for women like themselves. Yet whatever the inconveniences for white middle-class women, a fundamental reproductive right of racially oppressed and poor women is at stake. Sterilization abuse must be ended.

[12] Mary P. Ryan, *Womanhood in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc. 1975), p 162
[13] Melvin Steinfeld, *Our Racist Presidents* (San Ramon, California: Consensus Publishers, 1972), p 212
[14] Bonnie Mass, *Population Target: The Political Economy of Population Control in Latin America* (Toronto, Canada: Women's Educational Press, 1977), p. 20

[15] Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: Birth Control in America*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 157
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 158.
[17] *Ibid.*
[24] Dancis, *op. cit., p 96.*
[25] David M. Kennedy, *Birth Control in America: The Career of Margaret Sanger* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 21-22
[26] Mass, *op. cit.*, p. 27
[27] Gordon, *op. cit., p. 281.*
[28] Mass, *op. cit., p. 20.*
[29] Gordon, *op. cit., p 283.*
[30] Herbert Aptheker, "Sterilization, Experimentation and Imperialism", *Political Affairs*, Vol. LIII, No. 1 (January, 1974), p. 44.
[31] Gena Corea, *The Hidden Malpractice* (New York: A Jove/HBJ Book, 1977), p. 149.
[32] Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 332.
[33] *Ibid.*, p 332-333.
[34] Aptheker, "Sterilization,", p. 38, See also Anne Braden, "Forced Sterilizaion: Now Women Can Fight Back", *Southern Patriot*, September, 1973.
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] Jack Slater, "Sterilization, Newest Threat to the Poor", *Ebony,* Vol XXVIII, No. 12 (October, 1973), p. 150
[37] Braden, *op. cit.*
[38] Les Payne, "Forced Sterilization of the poor?" *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 26, 1974.
[39] Harold X, "Forced Sterilization Pervades the South", *Muhammed Speaks*, October 10, 1975
[40] Slater, *op. cit.*
[41] Payne, *op. cit.*
[42] *Ibid.*
[43] *Ibid.*
[44] Aptheker, "Sterilization", p. 40.
[45] Payne, *op. cit.*
[46] Aptheker, "Sterilization, p. 48.
[47] Arlene Eisen, "They're Trying to Take Our Future - Native American Women and Sterilization," *The Guardian*, March 23, 1972
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] Quoted in a pamphlet issued by the Committee to End Sterilization Abuse, Box A244, Cooper Station, New York 10003
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] *Ibid.*

Politic of "Population" as a number and "Ecology" as the crisis of the natural system (excerpt)

Farida Akhter

* * * *

Now the poor and the coloured are being blamed again for environmental destruction, "People pollute" is the new dehumanised cry of the conservationists. It is the people who pollute, it is the people who are cutting trees, clearing everything around them, "When it comes to deforestation, it is people -- even more than commercial logging or ranching -- that are responsible for the rapid depletion of the world's forests. Seventy percent of the third world families depend solely on wood for their fuel", says The Population Institute in one of their undated pamphlets. No empirical evidence was necessary to make such claims. No calculation is made to show how much the 70% dependence of the poor on forests have been responsible for deforestation as compared to logging industries. The old accusations with regard to development and growth are simply being rephrased in terms of environment.

The intention to link population with environment is in most cases to blame the poor and the coloured implicitly or explicitly, it has nothing to do with the need to adequately understand the relationship. In UNCED 92, Mostafa Tolba provided an official statistic, on behalf of UNEP, saying that the "third world with 77% of the world's population, earns 15% of the world's income, consumes 12% of the world's natural resources and 13% of the world's energy". If the 77% of the poor and coloured people of the world are consuming only 12% of the world's resources and 13% of the world energy, it is absurd to think that they are any stress at all on the environment. It is the consumption of the rich and the elites of the world that must be the primary concern in understanding the linkage between population and environment.

However, separating the issue of overconsumption from the overall functioning of the egocentric society, profit hungry economy and alienated structures of the states that primarily serve the multinational corporation in their globalized expansion, can be highly misleading. It is absolutely important to question the system itself. It is crucial to explain how it operates, how it renders a vast number of people as "surplus", over and above the need of labour power necessary for profit making machines to run for the system, and at the same time create an over consuming minority within the system. Otherwise, the people of the North will keep on blaming the South for "overpopulation", and the South in return, will blame the North for "overconsumption". In both cases, it is the people that are being blamed for ecological crisis. In both of its expression, racism finds ways to restore itself and divide the people of the world. The system operating as a raw force beyond the will and control of the people can not be effectively challenged.

But isn't there a *relation* between people and resources or in a wider sense, between people and nature? Of course, but *calculation* of the per capita resources of the world has nothing to do in understanding that relation. Such calculations are presented for political reasons, to declare a section of the world population disposable. The metabolic interaction between people and nature is not merely ecological in a narrow sense, but has social, economic, political and cultural dimensions and must be investigated in that complexity and richness.

* * * * *

population control equals

racism★cultural genocide★repression ★an environmental copout★sexism★ patriarchal medical practices★murder★ forced sterilisation of women★exploitation ★imperialism★oppre ssion★protection of ruling class priviledges

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

fight for reproductive FREEDOM

Barnacle Books, 1998